

**Testimony before the Joint Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement**  
**February 14, 2019**  
**SB 750 (Proposed) AN ACT CONCERNING THE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF MENTAL ILLNESS AT**  
**INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**Diane Frost**

Good evening Senator Haskell, Rep. Haddad and Distinguished Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee.

My name is Diane Frost and I am a registered voter in Stamford.

I need you to support ***Proposed S.B. No. 750 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF MENTAL ILLNESS AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.***

Let me say that the person I am: an educated, accredited social worker, tax payer, and lifelong Connecticut resident, is here because psychiatric medical attention was nearby in a time of my necessity. I went to college, as I expected, in a well-respected university in Washington, D.C. looking forward to learning and fun. I was in my sophomore year when I knew I needed help with racing thoughts and psychiatric symptoms.

I benefit today from literally walking across the street to the George Washington University Medical Center. For five days I received intense treatment for my newly diagnosed bipolar and anxiety disorders. You'd think, or believe, that even with such proximity to inpatient hospitalization, I'd care more about the isolating stigma applied by my classmates and everyone else finding out. Honestly, I didn't care. I had to admit myself if I was going to live. So I did!

Those five days were a mandate for my life to continue. What I found in the hospital were professionals caring for and about the vulnerable and downtrodden. In the face of too long in misery, there was at last an answer to love life again.

Upon release, and a semester at home in Connecticut, I returned to the District and GWU for the remainder of college. This was thanks to the Americans with Disabilities Act. I've always found it amazing that the bill was signed into law so close, four years, to my needing it. As I began to receive treatment in college, far away from home, I appreciated the Federal law allowing me to take a break from studying to attend to my health.

You see, my academic record suffered under the weight of my undiagnosed illness. Once I looked to return to school, I didn't have to battle against my academic probationary status. The experience of hospitalization, and subsequent recovery was labor intensive enough, minus the additional effort. And after two and a half years, I graduated with a bachelor's of arts, majoring in English. Along with the prestigious degree, I received my health with which I moved forward into a journalism career, recently followed by a master's of social work degree, all the while receiving treatment in conjunction with academia. In my journey, I'm aware and grateful, that treatment was so close and affordable with University's student health insurance.

It's irreplaceable that mental well-being is regarded as a necessity among students. In this day, and age, it shouldn't come down to luck as with me. My fellow students; facing health crises, and the educational opportunity that is necessary to enter the workforce and provide for themselves, require access to health care. Those services need to be as accessible as possible.

There will be stigma. The larger issue is that rightful access to this basic in healthcare is and will always be more impactful than stigma can ever be. I needed well-being and so do the students of today! Please support ***Proposed S.B. No. 750 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF MENTAL ILLNESS AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.***

Thank you for your time in listening.